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PERSONAL HISTORY OR DIARY OF  
VICE ADMIRAL ALFRED G. WARD, U. S. Navy  
WHILE SERVING AS COMMANDER SECOND FLEET

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Saturday, 20 October 1962

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At 10 A. M. relieved Vice Admiral John McNay Taylor as Commander SECOND Fleet in a brief but effective Change of Command Ceremony on the fantail of the Flagship, USS NEWPORT NEWS (CA-148), attended by about 400 important guests, including the top civilians within the City of Norfolk and vicinity.

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My orders originally indicated that I was to relieve as Fleet Commander in early January. I was told at the homecoming football game at Annapolis by the Chief of Naval Personnel, Vice Admiral Smedberg, that this relief would take place much earlier, presumably because of the increased interest in doing something about the Cuban situation, and the desire to have in command of the Fleet at the time of initiation of action a Commander who could normally be expected to stay in the command for a normal tour and not one such as Admiral Taylor who would be under orders for detachment. This speed-up was, in fact, executed with Admiral Rivero reporting on 12 October and relieving me as Commander Amphibious Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet, on 15 October. I reported aboard NEWPORT NEWS on 18 October and relieved on 20 October.

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I first heard of serious consideration by the administration being given to a blockade at sea during a briefing by Admiral Dennison of General Max Taylor shortly after he had been nominated by the President as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff-- this briefing attended by the top commanders of the Atlantic Fleet. At this time General Taylor stated that if we wanted to conduct military actions against the Soviets that in all probability we should face them at sea. His thesis was to the effect that use of air power would result in destruction of civilization as we know it, and that neither side could win; that limited war by ground forces in Europe would undoubtedly result in Soviet victory because of their greater superiority in Army manpower; and, therefore, the one area in which we have superiority was naval power, and that we may have to employ that naval power in

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order to check the spread of communism. Admiral Dennison and others argued against blockade of Soviet shipping because of the reaction which would undoubtedly occur and the fact that we require free use of the sea while the Soviet Union, as a land power, does not have this requirement for its survival. On 3 October, CINCLANTFLT promulgated an OpOrder for blockade of Cuba, in which he directed the Commander Joint Task Force 122 to conduct a blockade using COMCRUDESFLOT 6 (Rear Admiral Ailes) as Commander of the Blockade Group.

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While serving as COMPHIBLANT, and in my capacity as Commander of the Naval Task Force (CTF 123) for Cuban Operations, I had previously worked closely with OpPlans 312.

In conferences of top commanders under CINCLANT on these plans, General Sweeney, Commander Tactical Air Force, argued convincingly for Air Force control over 312 operations, with COMTAC acting as Commander in Chief, Air Force, Atlantic, under Admiral Dennison. His arguments were not only convincing but also successful. During these arguments he stated that his forces would be ready on 20 October. Naval aviators, Vice Admiral O'Beirne, Rear Admiral Chick Hayward, and Rear Admiral Stroh, stated that it was inconceivable to them that a

These arguments also were convincing and successful. Since no carriers were at Mayport or anywhere near the area, INDEPENDENCE was sailed about four days early from Norfolk in order to be within striking distance of Cuba by 20 October. Several other actions were taken which indicated that 20 October would be a key day. I believe that it was no accident that the Second Fleet change of command transpired on 20 October.

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On 19 October CINCLANT disestablished Commander Joint Task Force 122 for Cuban operations and absorbed the functions within his joint staff. Commander Joint Task Force 122 was Vice Admiral Taylor, Commander Second Fleet, under a different hat; and under this Joint Task Force Commander was the Army Component Commander, Lieutenant General Howze; and the Air Force Component Commander, Major General Preston. This made it possible for CINCLANT to control 312 and 316 operations directly via his Component Commanders with

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General Sweeney acting as CINCAFLANT. (Joint Task Force 122 was retained under the OpPlan 310 series

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On 19 October Typhoon Ella was to seaward of Hatteras and provided a cover for movements of forces. The press were not fooled, however, but cooperated and used the Navy excuse for moving forces.

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Even before Admiral Taylor and invited guests had left the ship and were still drinking punch and eating cookies at the reception on the forecastle, staff officers were begging me to speed the departing guests in order to take action on urgent Top Secret messages beginning to flow into the Comm Center. I asked Mrs. Ward to leave the ship, saying I would join her later to attend the barbecue given by the socially and financially prominent Jimmy Tyler at his Bayville Farms for lunch, and that we would attend the black tie ball in honor of Admiral Hewitt later that evening.

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Messages awaiting my action from CINCLANTFLT addressed to COMSECONDFLT required maintaining two ammunition ships (AE) in the southern area until further notice, sailing two TACAN-equipped ships to the Key West area to be positioned in the Florida straits to support CINCAFLANT as navigational ships for the strike aircraft under either the 312 or the 316 plan and to load aircraft in ENTERPRISE, which had sailed on the preceding day for the Mayport area--these aircraft to be suitable for utilization in the 312/316 plans, and required providing plane guards for recovery of these aircraft at sea. Also requiring action was the delivery of several hundred stragglers remaining in Norfolk when ENTERPRISE sailed suddenly. ENTERPRISE aircraft loading was modified to delete the A3J strike aircraft and to substitute therefor 20 Marine A4D's.

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My staff received by phone from CINCLANTFLT information that a message would be forthcoming to direct all ships in Florida ports to proceed to sea immediately. This information was passed to senior people in the various ports. A later decision, however, in the Fleet headquarters was not to take this action because of resulting publicity.

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By 11 A. M. just one hour after the beginning of the Change of

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Command Ceremony, it became apparent that this was no drill. I called Admiral Beakley, Deputy CINCLANT/CINCLANTFLT, and suggested that it might be profitable for me to come to Fleet headquarters and get briefed. He concurred. I joined Admirals Dennison, Beakley and Leverton in the Command Post Control Center and read messages from JCS to CINCLANT, and listened to conversations over the secure telephones between the Chairman of the JCS and CINCLANT. The decision had been made at that time to establish a blockade of Cuba to be effective at the time specified in a speech by the President that was expected either Sunday night or Monday night (either 21 October or 22 October). It was the intention of CINCLANTFLT at that time to conduct the blockade under the CTF 81 chain of command with Vice Admiral "Whitey" Taylor, COMASWFORLANT, as Blockade Commander.

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Vice Admiral Rivero, COMPBIHLANT, had sailed on 16 October, the day after relieving me of that command, for an amphibious exercise in Vieques. Vice Admiral Rivero would also be CTF 123 in the 316 plan, as previously prescribed.

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I argued to assign the Navy task force command, CTF 123, to COMSECONDFLT, inasmuch as Admiral Rivero would have his hands full as the Amphibious Commander, and the majority of the units of Second Fleet would be involved in the 123 operation. Admirals Dennison and Leverton seemed to "buy" this, but Beakley resisted. However, Admiral Beakley did state that he believed that COMSECONDFLT should be the Blockade Commander and Admiral Dennison agreed; and it was so decided.

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Admiral Beakley stated that he would shift command of 123 to COMSECONDFLT as soon as he could. The COMSECONDFLT Operations Officer, Captain Peters, began working with the CINCLANTFLT staff on a concept of conducting the blockade. I worked with this group for a while and helped develop a scheme for using twelve destroyers on station on an arc 500 miles from Cape Maisi, the eastern tip of Cuba. This 500-mile distance was indicated as being a JCS requirement and would ensure that the blockading ships would be out of normal range of Cuban air. We decided to place the ships about 60 miles apart and to provide air surveillance to the east of the blockade line, with the line covering the probable approaches from Europe to Cuba and covering the routes normally used by Block shipping in approaching Cuba. I asked that a HUK group be made available to be stationed near the northern end of the line in order to provide air surveillance over the open area between the northern extremity of the line and the coast of Florida,

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and also to be available to pick up land-based patrol aircraft in making contacts to the east of the line. OpNav plans provided for the inclusion of a CVA in the blockading force, and I made representation to Admiral Beakley that a HUK group would be more valuable than a CVA in interdicting shipping en route to Cuba. He agreed and our plans were made accordingly. This point was also bought by OpNav and never became an issue. Admiral Dennison liked the plan. He asked that I accompany him to Washington, leaving at 6 P. M., for a meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and to be prepared to discuss our proposed plans for blockade.

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Meanwhile, of course, I had called Mrs. Ward and cancelled all engagements for the day and for the foreseeable future.

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Lieutenant General Lou Truman, USA, who had just that day been appointed as Admiral Dennison's Deputy for CINCLANT Cuban Operations, and I accompanied the Admiral to Washington and proceeded immediately to the Director's Office, where we read proposed draft messages and were briefed on the forthcoming session. The Chairman granted permission for Lieutenant General Truman and myself to be present at the meeting. The meeting of the Joint Chiefs began at 9 P. M., Standard Time. Present were: General Max Taylor, the Chairman; Admiral George Anderson, the CNO, with Vice Admiral Oley Sharp, OP-06; General Buzz Wheeler, Chief of Staff of the Army, plus one other Army officer; two Major Generals representing the Air Force; the Director; about six Major Generals from the Joint Staff; Lieutenant General Munn and one other General from the Marine Corps. General Taylor dominated the meeting and, in my opinion, was superb. There were no major differences between any of the services and all decisions were unanimous. Decisions made previously in meetings at the White House required readiness to execute the 312 plan concurrently with the establishment of the blockade. Air Forces were still being moved from many air bases to Southern Florida, and the movement would not be completed until Monday. The decision by the Chiefs was made, therefore, to recommend that the President's speech be made on Monday rather than on Sunday, in order to permit this preparation. Admiral Sharp showed me the proposed message drafted by OP-06 for presentation to the Chiefs for the JCS to send to CINCLANT, providing blockade instructions. I took exceptions to two aspects of these instructions; first, the 500-mile distance from Cuba as being excessive and resulting in utilization of too many ships; and, second,

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inclusion of air interdiction as being impractical without a CVA and poor utilization of a CVA, particularly since CVA should be in position to execute the 312 plan. He stated that he would attempt to remove both provisions but could guarantee no results. The 500-mile limitation was discussed at some detail by the Chiefs. General Taylor stated in his opinion it was a foolish provision, in that current intelligence indicated that the IL23's, or light bombers, while being assembled, were not yet operational; that the only aircraft of concern were MIGs; and that 180 miles should be adequate. Admiral Anderson agreed with this but the other Chiefs were less than enthusiastic and no firm decision was made. When the orders came out the next day, the 500-mile restriction had been eliminated and substituted therefor was the provision that the blockade lines should be outside the range of Cuban weapons. The air interdiction also did not appear in these instructions; but in a separate directive, as an annex to the blockade instructions, was a directive to CINCLANT to provide blockade of Block aircraft as designated by the JCS if directed to do so.

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We returned to Norfolk at about 2330, having had dinner on board the aircraft at about 2300. I went with Admiral Dennison to his War Room for a conference with his staff, and finally arrived home at 0130, Sunday morning.

Sunday 21 October 1962

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The day was spent alternating between the Flagship, NEWPORT NEWS, and CINCLANTFLT headquarters. It was apparent that the Flagship and the blockading force units would sail on Monday.

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Verbal orders were received to establish a blockade, stating that the probable first target would be POLTAVA, expected to arrive in the Havana area on 29 October. Intelligence indicated that POLTAVA had missiles in her hold and her cargo would be in the prohibited category.

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I previously sent a message to Admiral Ailes to leave his base at Charleston and come to Norfolk for personal briefings. He arrived during the forenoon and accompanied me until about 1600, attending

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conferences in LANTFLT headquarters. My staff and I worked on many details, including development of OpOrders and such items as requesting Russian language interpreters to be used in the Visit and Search parties. In this detail, full cooperation was given by BuPers, as indicated by the fact that my previous Flag Lieutenant when I was COMCRUDIV 1, Lieutenant Commander Bill Martin, was called by BuPers at about 3 A. M. on Monday morning and informed that he would be required to be on board the NEWPORT NEWS prior 1400 that day for a period of temporary duty of about 90 days. Nine of the ten officer interpreters made the deadline, some coming from such obscure places as Professor of Naval Science at Rensselaer Poly, Marine Corps Schools at Quantico, and other various activities. Also in this category were additional photographic teams, provision of each ship with tear gas, riot gun ammunition, hand grenades, and miniature tape recorders with microphones.

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During the afternoon I received instructions from CINCLANTFLT to assume operational control and form a blockading force, Task Force 136. I was assigned ESSEX, which was undergoing training in the Guantanamo area but fortunately had an air group aboard. I assigned to ESSEX destroyers which were at sea, to be relieved by four ships of DESRON 24, which were directed to sail from Newport. All instructions for movements of ships prescribed "minimize public attention". The President's speech was definitely to be made on Monday night.

Monday, 22 October 1962

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I held a pre-sail conference of commanding officers of the destroyers in the Norfolk area who were to be units of the blockading force. Attending was Commanding Officer, CANBERRA, who would also be assigned to the force. COMCRUDESFLOTS 4 and 12 were present, the former to be advised of the necessity to get all of his destroyers in the best possible material condition and to prepare these particular ships for sailing; and the latter to be informed that he would have to move off the CANBERRA in order to provide her as a Flagship for COMCRUDESFLOT 6. This was the first knowledge that any of these Captains had that they would sail on this day for an indefinite period in the blockading force. They were all highly enthusiastic. The consensus was that such action was long overdue, and the general

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feeling was that each of us present was privileged to serve our country in this endeavor. I authorized the Captains to make local telephone calls in attempting to get key men back to the ship but prescribed that there would be no general recall, no information on television or radio, and no telegrams sent out of the area, in order to minimize public attention. Emergency requisitions were placed. Of interest, the newspapers had picked up the movements of forces of all services and knew that something was afoot. The President had announced that he would inform the American people and the world of the reasons therefor in an address on radio and television to be made at 2000 (EST) in the evening. Admiral Dennison informed me that it was expected that the President would issue the blockade proclamation at 1800 (local) on the 23rd. I informed the Admiral that we would be prepared to make some intercepts at that time.

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Monday was a busy day.

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I was directed to provide escorts for the Amphibious Force, which I did; on my own initiative I also provided escorts for underway replenishment groups consisting of oilers and ammunition ships.

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It appeared that everything was in readiness at about 1600, so I took Lieutenant Commander Bill Martin (who had just shortly before reported aboard and to whom I had assigned duties in my staff) home with me for a big steak dinner. We returned to the ship at about 2030, and the ship sailed at 2100, on schedule.

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I took OTC of the movement group, NEWPORT NEWS with CANBERRA in column astern, and, as screen commander, COMDESDIV 182 with his six destroyers providing the ASW screen. To my amazement I found out that Second Fleet staff could not operate; that the staff had evidently been training in planning and in strategic control, but that they did not have experience in tactical control of ships, and that they were not prepared to take action quickly as required in tactical situations. A well-meaning Lieutenant on the High Command Circuit, in acknowledging a message from CINCLANTFLT, would be likely to state "I received your message" or "I've got it" or "OK" vice the accepted "Roger." The Junior Watch Officer on the Tactical Circuit directed a destroyer to come alongside the Flagship at a time when the Flagship was in a 90 degree turn and not prepared

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to receive him. This is no reflection on previous administrations, in that there was never any occasion for the assumption of tactical command by the Fleet staff.

Tuesday, 23 October 1962

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A message from CINCLANTFLT advised that the proclamation would probably be made as scheduled with an effective date of 241400Z. The blockade would be effective on the date prescribed by the President. CINCLANTFLT designated the first two targets as POLTAVA and KIMOVSK. At this time there were known to be 18 block ships in Cuba and 30 block ships en route from Europe to Cuba. Of these we had reason to suspect that five Soviet ships were carrying offensive weapons and of submitting false port declarations. One Liberian ship, MARUCLA, was also suspect.

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Even though the JCS directive had eliminated the 500-mile restriction, the CINCLANTFLT directive retained it but authorized a Blockade Commander to vary stations at his discretion. With CINCLANTFLT's concurrence, I decided to establish initially the stations on the 500-mile arc and so directed the Force. This decision, on hindsight, appears to be good because it provided more time from the time of intercept for the decision to be made by the U. S. Government as to whether or not the ship should be boarded. In each case, on intercept, a full description of the ship was transmitted by voice to CINCLANTFLT and to CNO, and the ship was trailed pending further instructions from higher authority.

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Many supporting actions were taken to sail logistic ships with escorts in order to keep the majority of the units of the Second Fleet at sea. The second Fleet units consisted of Task Force 135, COMCARDIV 2 in ENTERPRISE, COMCARDIV 6 in INDEPENDENCE, plus an underway replenishment group and 15 screening destroyers; the Blockading Force, Task Force 136, consisting of CTF 136 in NEWPORT NEWS, CANBERRA, COMDESDIV 182 in LAWRENCE, KEITH, SOLEY and BORIE from Norfolk; COMCRUDESFLT 6 in MACDONOUGH (later to move to CANBERRA) from Charleston; COMDESRON 26 in DEWEY with LEARY, STEINAKER and J. R. PIERCE also from Norfolk; COMDESRON 16 in

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BIGELOW with MACCAFFERY, LAWE, SELLERS, FORREST ROYAL, GEARING from Mayport; WITEK, an OPTEVFOR ship, from New London; COMCARDIV 18 in ESSEX; COMDESRON 34 in BLANDY with C. S. SPERRY, BARRY and KEPPLER; four ships of DESRON 24 en route from Newport; and the URG with its screen.

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All ships proceeded to station at 27 knots in order to have the quarantine line established and effective on schedule at 241400Z.

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The President carefully avoided the use of the word blockade in both his speech and in the proclamation, and our OpOrders were modified to substitute "quarantine" for "blockade" wherever appearing.

Wednesday, 24 October 1962

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Established the quarantine line as prescribed in the OpOrder; 12 destroyer stations, 60 miles apart, on an arc 500 miles from Cape MAISI at the eastern end of Cuba, CANBERRA with two escorting destroyers backing up the northern end of the line, and NEWPORT NEWS with two destroyers backing up the southern end of the line; CTF 136 in NEWPORT NEWS; CTF 136.1, the Surface Group Commander (Rear Admiral Ailes) in CANBERRA; CTG 136.2, COMCARDIV 18 (Rear Admiral Christensen) in ESSEX with five destroyers to westward of the line; and the Mobile Logistic Support Group (CTG 136.3) (Captain Dalton) in support. At this time I informed CINCLANTFLT that it was my intention later to move stations closer to the Bahamas but to keep them sufficiently distant to insure intercept of suspicious contacts during daylight hours to eastward of the island chain.

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Directed COMCARDIV 18 in ESSEX to depart Guantanamo at best speed to intercept the Soviet ship KIMOVSK.

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Directed NEWPORT NEWS with her two destroyers to intercept POLTAVA.

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Was informed by CINCLANTFLT that there were three positive

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Soviet submarines in the Atlantic headed for the quarantine area with several other probable subs on the loose.

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All forces in position to execute OpPlan 312 if directed.

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I requested permission from Commander Eastern Sea Frontier to use the AEW aircraft at Roosevelt Roads to detect aircraft in the event I was ordered to interdict Soviet air, with the AEW aircraft to control intercepts. I requested from CGFMFLANT the use of Marine interceptors (F8U's) and tankers (GV-1's also classified as C130's) on a not-to-interfere-with-primary-mission basis in the event of a requirement to intercept a Soviet aircraft. Both COMEASTSEAFRON and CGFMFLANT approved such requests; however, the OpOrder, when promulgated by CINCLANTFLT, assigned the task to Commander Caribbean Sea Frontier rather than to Commander Second Fleet.

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It became evident during the afternoon that a pattern of operations was emerging; that some few Soviet Bloc tankers were continuing on a westerly heading toward Cuba, but that all 8 of the Block freighters were reversing course and returning toward Europe. Specifically, and of greatest interest, POLTAVA took an easterly heading. LAWRENCE, who had been directed to proceed ahead at maximum speed to effect intercept of POLTAVA, was recalled. This was quite evidently a move on the part of the Soviet government to withhold information from the rest of the world as to the nature of the cargoes en route Cuba, and to permit only those tankers and those chartered ships with foreign flags in which there were no "forbidden" cargoes to proceed. Statements of Soviet officials later confirmed these facts.

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Information from the highest authority prescribed "Do not stop and board. Keep under surveillance. Make continuous reports." Also apparent was the fact that the quarantine ships should make intercepts, should report in detail the name of the ship, the description of the ship, and description of cargoes that were evident on deck. This information would be transmitted simultaneously to CINCLANTFLT in Norfolk and to the CNO in Washington by voice HICOM circuits. Instructions would be received in each case as to whether or not boarding was to be accomplished. These reports were all in plain language over the HICOM circuit. During these first critical days,

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the operation was conducted primarily by means of this single HICOM circuit, with all information of value being sent to Norfolk and Washington; and directives from Norfolk and Washington being delivered by the same circuit. Communications within the line and on other circuits were not good due to poor radio frequency propagation in the atmosphere. NEWPORT NEWS could manage to remain in contact on the HICOM circuit fairly effectively and, by relays, was able to contact ships on the line by one circuit or another; no other ship had this capability.

Thursday, 25 October 1962

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Instructions were received to make maximum effort to intercept the Soviet tanker or oiler BUCHAREST who had many passengers aboard. ESSEX was directed to intercept. ESSEX aircraft was successful in locating the ship, and ESSEX reported in position to intercept.

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Simultaneously, ESSEX made contact on a submarine and stayed with this submarine until she surfaced. On the surface photographs were taken and disclosed it was a Soviet FOXTROT class. Within the next two days a total of four positive FOXTROT class submarines were sighted on the surface in the vicinity of the quarantine line, and a fifth "possible" Soviet submarine was detected south of Cuba. The ZULU class submarine, which had been observed fueling from the submarine tender TEREK in the mid-Atlantic, presumably returned to the Soviet Union. Other possible and probable contacts were made.

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BUCHAREST was tracked on and off for the next few days--with orders coming from Washington to track her, then to trail her out of sight but within radar range, then to discontinue trailing, then to resume contact and resume trailing. She was finally trailed by W. C. LAWE until she entered a Cuban port, with LAWE remaining out of territorial waters of Cuba. She was never boarded. Her movements were erratic. At one time she was dead in the water for a period of more than 48 hours and reported she was working on her engines.

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Air surveillance by Commander Anti-Submarine Warfare Force, Atlantic, was most effective. He conducted sorties by patrol aircraft from Bermuda and from Roosevelt Roads. SAC also assisted in aircraft surveillance of the Atlantic south of Bermuda and eastward.

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USS PIERCE, in station 1, made contact with a Lebanese freighter, MARUCLA, under charter to the Soviet Union, with a reported cargo of sulphur, paper, machinery, trucks and various parts. During mid-morning, received instructions to direct PIERCE to stop and board the Lebanese freighter, MARUCLA. By the time this directive had reached PIERCE, PIERCE had ceased trailing MARUCLA in order to refuel, had taken on fuel, and had started tracking a Greek ship. Later that afternoon I received an urgent message, personal, from Admiral Beakley saying that it was of greatest importance to stop and board MARUCLA; that he had provided all the information he had available, and that it was up to me to do something about it. I sent a message to RANDOLPH requesting assistance of Task Group ALPHA, and made this a personal plea to Rear Admiral Lee. Just after dark, PIERCE reported that she had overheard conversations to RANDOLPH requesting assistance in relocating MARUCLA; that she had voice communications with a RANDOLPH aircraft; and that RANDOLPH aircraft had made positive identification of the ship. PIERCE requested authority to resume trailing, which was granted by voice on HICOM net; and she immediately proceeded and resumed contact. Meanwhile, Admiral Beakley had suggested that it would be nice if KENNEDY was one the first ships to board a ship suspected of carrying forbidden cargoes but that any ship would do. I directed COMDESDIV 182 in USS JOSEPH P. KENNEDY, JR. to proceed to the contact and on arrival to assume on-scene command. Directives were issued to board at first light on the 27th.

Saturday, 27 October 1962

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KENNEDY joined PIERCE shortly after daylight and proceeded to board MARUCLA. The boarding party included the Executive Officers of both destroyers, PIERCE and JOSEPH P. KENNEDY, JR. The crews

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were dressed in whites, made an excellent appearance, and conducted their business in a military and courteous manner. A running commentary was provided CNO and CINCLANTFLT on the HICOM net. Answers were provided before questions could be asked, and the entire operation went very smoothly. The world press gave complete coverage of the information released in Washington. No forbidden weapons or cargoes were detected and the ship was released to proceed. I commended both ships and the Division Commander.

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LAWRENCE and MACDONOUGH intercepted and trailed the Soviet tanker GROZNY. Many photographs of this ship were taken. She is a modern, large, new ship and carried large, long cylindrical tanks on deck, which were covered with a heat shield. This ship was trailed for several days and permitted to proceed without having been boarded. Many other ships of foreign registries, some of which were under contract to the Soviet Union, were intercepted but permitted to proceed after trailing.

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Refueled NEWPORT NEWS and destroyers, NEWPORT NEWS being down to about 30% fuel. Received from the oiler a small amount of mail, but was amazed at the number of messages from all over the country of good wishes and prayers, resulting from national publicity initiated in the New York Times, stating that I was the Quarantine Force Commander. Among such letters was a personal letter from the Historian of the Navy, Rear Admiral E. M. Eller, which stated in part, "You are making history. Our nation and the world will be effected forever after by what you and your Fleet do and how you do it--not only by your actions, but by the reasons behind them and your decisions. What you do will be studied by generations to come--if there are any, the Lord permitting. So I urge you to make a special effort amidst overwhelming demands to insure that your own people fully and clearly report and analyze what happens." In my opinion this dramatic language is not justified by the mission assigned, but this letter and other messages received provided the inspiration to dictate this personal history.

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Received a message from CINCLANTFLT stating that the JCS had concurred with CINCLANT's recommendations in shifting the barrier closer to the Bahamas. I had recommended to CINCLANTFLT that the barrier be reduced to 5 stations covering the passages through

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the Bahama island chain, with individual ships taking stations near the entrance to these passages during the night and moving out to the northeast during the day by a distance of about 100 miles, returning beginning at dusk. This would insure that ships that were detected by patrol aircraft could be intercepted by the destroyers during daylight periods. CINCLANT adapted the stations which I had recommended but decided to use a few more ships than I had allowed, so that the new stations required 10 destroyers and one cruiser on the line with a back-up by a HUK group and an underway replenishment group.

Monday, 29 October 1962

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Reformed the line in accordance with JCS-approved stations. Since only one cruiser was required, I decided to permit NEWPORT NEWS an opportunity to conduct a much overdue gunfire support exercise. This cruiser had not fired a shore bombardment exercise in more than a year, and it was one of the two ships scheduled for fire support in the 316 plan. On interest, decreased emphasis in recent years on guns and gunfire support is reflected in the fact that neither NEWPORT NEWS nor CANBERRA, the only two operational cruisers in the Second Fleet, had fired a gunfire support exercise in more than a year. With CINCLANTFLT's concurrence, I made COMCRUDESFLOT 6 (Rear Admiral Ailes) acting CTF 136, and departed at dark for San Juan. I directed the destroyers not required in the new line to proceed to San Juan for upkeep. Their upkeep was short-lived in that a requirement developed to escort Amphibious Group 3 with a brigade of Marines embarked from the time they departed Canal Zone on 6 November. Assigned six ships to this task.

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Meanwhile the business of providing logistic support to ships, of handling high priority cargoes, mail and film, and of continuing to intercept and trail ships headed for Cuba proceeded. A two-day lull in intercepts was affected during the visit of the Secretary of the United Nations, Mr. U Thant, to Cuba. It was apparent that our directives were being influenced by the actions of Mr. Khrushchev, when he admitted that offensive missiles were in fact in Cuba and that he would proceed to dismantle them and ship them back to the Soviet Union.



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Wednesday, 31 October 1962

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NEWPORT NEWS spent the day and evening in conducting a fire support exercise at Culebra.

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November 1st and 2nd were spent in a very pleasant respite in San Juan. On 1 November I reported by telephone to Admiral Dennison and informed him I would leave on 3 November to resume command of Task Force 136.

Saturday, 3 November 1962

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Conferred with Rear Admiral Flaherty, COMCRUDESFLOT 12, on his arrival in San Juan to act as destroyer liaison and control officer in that area, and departed for quarantine line.

Sunday, 4 November 1962

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Relieved Rear Admiral Alles as CTF 136 and directed him in CANBERRA to proceed to Norfolk for about two weeks upkeep.

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The Quarantine Force continued to intercept and report movements of merchant ships headed for Cuba and to trail them until they reached Cuba ports.

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The pattern of operations within the quarantine line became stabilized with the 7 CHESTNUT (code word for the quarantine line) stations manned by NEWPORT NEWS plus 13 destroyers, with the HUK group operating to the eastward and the logistic support group to the westward. Ships on the line were topped off with fuel every other day. Sufficient destroyers were provided to permit ships who had served on the line for extended periods to go in for 5 days tender availability either in San Juan or in Mayport.

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An odd and conflicting series of events and developments were taking place. Mr. Krushchev had agreed to dismantle missile bases and ship missiles out of Cuba. The Deputy First Secretary, Mr. Mikoyan, was in Cuba trying to persuade Castro to permit inspections but was unsuccessful. Castro continued belligerent talk but was beginning to relax his preparedness measures. The debates in the United Nations were taking on a conciliatory aspect. Mr. Krushchev and President Kennedy were in general agreement on actions to be taken to reduce tensions.

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The military posture of the United States around Cuba continued to be one of increased readiness, with the sizeable Marine brigade embarked in PHIBGRU 3 continuing its passage to the Cuban area, departing the Canal Zone on 6 November with 21 ships in which more than 12,000 marines were embarked. Air Force units and Army units continued to be positioned for an assault on Cuba if ordered. A two-carrier task force consisting of ENTERPRISE and INDEPENDENCE continued to operate south of Cuba in instant readiness to strike if directed. The entire Second Marine Division was loaded out and moved to more southern areas, with the majority being in port in Charleston and Mayport but with sizeable units at sea off the Florida Coast and at the Eleuthera holding ground. About 7 November it appeared that Soviet submarines were beginning to withdraw from the quarantine line.

Wednesday, 7 November 1962

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In compliance with orders from CINCLANTFLT, Rear Admiral Ailes flew from Charleston to San Salvador and then transferred by helicopter to NEWPORT NEWS to relieve me as CTF 136, in order that I could return to Norfolk in the same aircraft for a conference on Thursday, 8 November, in connection with changes to the 316 plan. I traveled alone and made an uneventful trip, arriving in Norfolk about 9 P. M.

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Eight-year-old Cindy came aboard the aircraft with the customs inspectors and was glad to see her daddy.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Thursday, 8 November 1962

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Ships in the quarantine line began intercepting merchantmen leaving Cuba to ascertain as far as possible the fact that Soviet missiles were actually being shipped out and en route to Soviet Union.

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In Norfolk I contacted many of the people on Admiral Dennison's staffs who had control of or interest in quarantine operations. Vice Admiral Jack Taylor acted as my mentor. Of interest, I was treated with more respect than on any previous occasion, possibly because of some very favorable national publicity (I do not yet know who my publicity agents are but am indebted to them) or possibly because of the fact that I had been at sea doing a job with ships and men while the others were working in offices at desks and were able to be home each evening. Of the two types of jobs, however, I had much the easier and the more interesting.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~  
CONFIDENTIAL

The OP-316 conference was chaired and controlled by Lieutenant General Lou Truman, with various members of his staff making individual briefings. The only thing new from previous 316 planning was that additional ground forces would be employed with the principle elements of two army divisions and the remaining elements of the First Marine Division from the West Coast being added to forces available for the execution of this plan.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~  
CONFIDENTIAL

I again discussed with Admirals Rivero, Taylor and Beakley the fact that it seemed incongruous to me that in the 316 plan all of the operational units of the Second Fleet, including the Second Fleet flagship, would be engaged but that the Commander of the Second Fleet would merely be a passenger in his flagship, with a naval task fleet being commanded by COMPHIBLANT as CTF 123. Because Admiral Rivero had done so much work in this regard and his staff is eminently capable, I did not discuss this subject with Admiral Dennison. Admiral Taylor agreed fully with me, and Admiral Beakley indicated again that the change should be made as soon as it was feasible; specifically if a stand-down on present operations were to be ordered, then the command would be shifted to Commander Second Fleet.

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I called to pay my respects on Admiral Dennison in the afternoon, expecting to stay just a couple of minutes because of his busy schedule. He sat me down and gave me about a half-hour's briefing on his problems and the principal issues and decisions facing the Atlantic command. He stated he was concerned with three factors: first, whether or not missiles were actually leaving Cuba in the ships; second, what would be done about the IL28 (medium jet bombers); and third, verification in all of the aspects as regards offensive weapons in Cuba. He mentioned that the United States prescribed a prohibition of all offensive weapons but that Mr. Krushchev had agreed to removing only the MRBMs and IRBMs, and stated that he was doing just that, and that the United States should not bring in additional factors. Simultaneously, Castro announced that the bombers now belonged to Cuba and were no longer under the control of the Soviet Union and would not be removed. Admiral Dennison gave me a complete briefing on the submarine capabilities of Soviet submarines, evidenced by their operating in the Western Atlantic in numbers.

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It was a thoroughly worthwhile day of discussions.

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After returning home I took Cindy for a swim in the enclosed pool and gained her permission to go to a black tie dinner as a Kiwanian, and was recognized at the dinner as coming from Cuba.

Friday, 9 November 1962

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I returned to NEWPORT NEWS, flying via Mayaguana, and relieved Admiral Ailes. All except two of the nine ships listed by Mr. Krushchev as carrying missiles out of Cuba had been intercepted, photographed, and inspected visually by ships close alongside.

Saturday, 10 November 1962

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The remaining two of the 9 Soviet ships were intercepted and observed from patrolling quarantine-line ships at close range with

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pictures taken both from aircraft and from the ships. The 42 missiles announced by Mr. Krushchev were accounted for in full, with the proviso that the missile carriers were sighted but the actual missile within could not be indentified.

Sunday, 11 November 1962

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Received orders designating Commander Second Fleet as CTF 123, the Naval Task Force Commander, for both special plans 314 and 316, to relieve Commander Amphibious Force, Atlantic, of these duties, effective for planning now and for operations when ordered about 24 November.

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Attended an inspirational church service on the forecastle and enjoyed beautiful sunshine and tropical weather. Our Chaplain, Lieutenant Commander Hammond a Methodist from South Carolina, is superb. Also attended a Marine Birthday Party in the Crews Mess as a guest of the marine detachment. The traditional cake-cutting ceremony, with a steak dinner, provided a Happy Birthday Party and an impressive one under the circumstances. I gave a ten-minute talk which was well received.

Monday, 12 November 1962

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Received orders to be relieved on 13 November by Admiral Ailes and for me to return to Norfolk with key members of my staff to get going on planning for OpPlan 316.

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Reconstituted the CHESTNUT line after completion of the special formations used to intercept Soviet ships leaving Cuba with missiles.

Tuesday, 13 November 1962

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Was relieved by Admiral Ailes, as directed and returned by air to Norfolk. The Flagship approached within helo range of San Salvador, where I was picked up by an R4D-8. Established headquarters in Building AP'12 at the Naval Base pending return of the Flagship. Continued planning throughout the week with CINCLANTFLT staff and other interested activities. The daily pattern of activity was as follows:

0800 (about) arrived in the office and read messages.

0900 attended the morning CINCLANT/CINCLANTFLT operational briefing.

0930 attended the daily conference conducted by VADM Beakley with the key members of CINCLANT/CINCLANTFLT staffs. These conferences were attended by Air Force and Army generals attached to CONARC and TAC plus the CINCLANT and CINCLANTFLT staffs. I was the only person not actually assigned to CINCLANT staff who was invited to these conferences.

Monday, 19 November 1962

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CANBERRA with COMCRUDESFLT 6 staff embarked sailed from Norfolk to relieve NEWPORT NEWS as Flagship of the Quarantine Force.

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Tuesday, 13 November 1962

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The President at a news conference announced that it was apparent that the Soviets were sincere in their desires to remove offensive weapons from Cuba and that Mr. Krushchev had agreed to dismantle the IL28 bombers and to return them to the Soviet Union. The President stated that he was therefore directing discontinuance and disestablishment of the quarantine operations and the quarantine force.

Wednesday, 21 November 1962

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NEWPORT NEWS returned to Norfolk, arriving just after dark in a miserable, driving rain.

Thursday, Thanksgiving Day, 22 November 1962

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The majority of the ships that had been serving in the quarantine line arrived in home ports. Other ships maintaining readiness remained on station with Defense Condition III remaining in effect. ENTERPRISE and INDEPENDENCE operated south of Cuba, 4 radar picket destroyers operated to the north of Cuba; the Fleet Marine Forces, Atlantic, were embarked in ships of the Amphibious Force, Atlantic, with three-fourths of such ships operating to the south and one-fourth in the Norfolk area. The 5th MED embarked in two PhibRons from PhibPac were operating in the vicinity of Cuba.

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Enjoyed Thanksgiving Day with all three of my daughters and grand-daughter being with me.

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Wednesday, 28 November 1962

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Made a speech to the Hampton Roads Chapter of the Navy League. This was the first speech in which wraps had been removed from security and which permitted the disclosure of human interest stories pertaining to the Quarantine Force. For the next few months I made several speeches on this subject. These speeches were cleared by the Department of Defense and State. Copy of one speech (they were all quite similar) is attached.